

# Class Warrior

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## FOR PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN SYRIA



### IMPERIALISM, THE GLOBAL CRISIS, AND THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION

The global capitalist crisis that has built up since 2007 can only be resolved in two ways. Either the rivalry between the two imperialist blocs succeeds in resolving the crisis by means of depression and war, or the international working class mobilizes to defeat imperialism and bring about a socialist revolution. The imperialists are engaged in a struggle between the entrenched and declining powers bloc led by US imperialism and the emergent Chinese/Russian imperialist bloc, over the resources, strategic assets and the super-profits to be extracted from the proletarianized masses and their homelands. The global south has become the battleground between these rival blocs at the expense of the semi-colonial nations and the working masses. The semi-colonial revolution is the flashpoint for the current international crisis of capitalism, where the imperialist forces and their national agents are confronted by popular resistance. The Arab Revolution that began in 2011 is an expression of the beginnings of a global challenge to the rule of capital by the world's workers who refuse to pay for the imperialist crisis and which has opened the road to permanent revolution. The revolutionary war in Syria has been the vanguard of the Arab Revolution and the global revolution for more than two years.

The initial form that this Arab Revolution has taken is the bourgeois democratic revolution, since the workers in the Arab countries have first to overthrow the national bourgeoisies that act as the agents of imperialism in order to win even the most basic bourgeois democratic rights. This is because imperialism requires authoritarian local agents to enforce exploitative social relations in semi-colonies, with or without military intervention from the outside. This arrangement has given rise to many variations of crony capitalism, hybrid monarchic-capitalism, "radical nationalist" capitalism, and variants with

bourgeois-democratic institutions. But mostly they act as mere fig leaves and their stability is derived from their ability to contain the masses and please the bankers.

Today this predatory, parasitic imperialism, targets the semi-colonies, coming at them from two fronts. Either established crony regimes continue to contain the masses and deliver booty to the (currently) dominant imperialist powers, or the masses upset the apple cart and chart an independent course. Right away of course, the "out" imperialist powers contest for economic hegemony with their imperialist rivals for control of the semi-colonial state, even as they face a revolutionary uprising. Where direct military re-colonization is not a viable option, the "out" imperialist power aims for "regime change" either with behind-the-scenes maneuvering or by propelling itself on the back of a popular uprising. The extent to which the popular uprising is or can be subordinated to imperialist forces is the point in contention.

The Syrian masses are fighting for their liberation against the two major imperialist blocs, their proxies and the ultra-reactionary theocrats. For the working class to assert itself, it requires its party and program to unite the masses to carry the revolution against all forces of exploitation and oppression. While the two imperialist camps and theocrats have the resources of world capital and two oil monarchies behind them, the Syrian masses have the wind of the international crisis of capitalism at their back. So it isn't just that the revolution happened in Syria as part of the Arab Spring. The Syrian revolution is the most advanced part of the reawakening of the Arab national revolution that started as the Arab Spring against the austerity measures imposed by national bourgeois regimes on behalf of imperialism.

Given it is the product of the repartition of global markets between

the two imperialist blocs in crisis, the Syrian Revolution threatens to destabilize the status quo of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and has Ban Ki Moon sweating. It has become the center of the struggle between the rival blocs over control of MENA. While both blocs are contesting control over MENA resources, neither wants a successful revolution. A victorious Syrian revolution would re-ignite the revolution in Palestine, Egypt, and across MENA. After more than two years and 100,000 dead there is no sign that the revolution is near defeat. Quite the opposite. Its popular support has grown and the semi-fascist regime stays in power only because of Russian arms and Iranian and Hezbollah fighters. It is because imperialism has not been able to defeat the revolution and impose its crisis with impunity that the armed struggle in Syria proves that it is possible for the masses to shift the balance of forces against all the odds with only AK47s and homemade mortars and rockets.



*Obviously not supplied from the USA arsenal!*

The potential of the Syrian revolutionary war to ‘destabilize’ the MENA is evident in a number of developments. Many fighters have joined the revolution from MENA, including those from Libya. The fear of revolution is driving the two blocs to negotiate a ‘peace’ to keep a lid on the revolution. Turkey has played a role of passive support for the revolution, in line with NATO, to pressure Assad to step down and negotiate a solution. The Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt has been forced by popular pressure to break with Assad. This regime has to deploy the army to keep control, opening up divisions between the ranks and the general staff. The Palestinian masses in the camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon support the revolution. The intervention of Israel shows that it fears both the Syrian revolution and the further arming of Hezbollah, destabilizing its borders. The intervention of Hezbollah is a desperate measure to defend the Assad regime. But despite setbacks and lack of arms, none of these attempts to contain and expropriate the revolution will deter it from its course. *Nor will attempts to divide and rule the popular revolutionary forces.*

The Kurdish national struggle intersects with that of the anti-Assad forces on one side and confounds imperialism with multiple new complexities. At the same time the age-old Kurdish drive to national liberation collides with full force against the Sunni theocrats’ dream of a new Caliphate. Likewise the Syrian Revolution applies tremendous political pressures upon all the political tendencies supporting the Palestinians. And we can hope that this crucible will produce a revolutionary program and party of the Palestinian working class. The Palestinians now have hope they can bury their butchers, Zionism

and Assad! Thus the Syrian Revolution is both the vanguard of the battle of the oppressed against all imperialisms and all their servants. And the Syrian Revolution more and more consciously becomes the oppresseds’ champion.

## A REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The war in Syria today poses deep theoretical questions for the revolutionary movement. What is the role of the left and the workers organizations when a popular movement rises up to confront and challenge the state? Today hundreds of thousands take to the streets in Brazil against the Popular Front administered for three terms by the social-democratic PT (Workers Party). At the same time the protest movement against the Popular Front in Syria has become a revolutionary uprising.<sup>1</sup> We look not only at the class composition of the masses in the streets and their demands and forms of self-organization, but at the class character of the state and the relationship of the state and the nation to imperialism.

The post WWII ascent to power of the national liberation movements in the semi-colonies, guided as they were by nationalist anti-imperialists, did not abolish imperialist exploitation, in large part because without abolishing capitalism and restraining the influence of the Law Of Value (LOV) on the local labor power market, every semi-colony becomes subject to the control of the international capitalist market. Syria was no different. Like many nationalists, the Ba’ath Party toyed with Socialist rhetoric, initiated State Owned Enterprises, formed a strong state repressive apparatus, tied the trade unions to the state and established strong relations with the USSR. But it did not abolish capitalism, which is necessary to free labor power from its subjugation to the LOV. Rather, for forty years the al-Assad family has ruled autocratically in a Red-Brown Popular Front with the Syrian Communist Party (SCP). Thus the state is characterized as semi-fascist semi-colonial. As a semi-colony, however, Syria is an oppressed nation in relation to imperialism.

A comprador class of capitalists mediates between the demands and business deals of imperialism and the day-to-day exploitation of local labor power, just as in other semi-colonies. It is the privilege derived from decades of post WWII capitalist development that the Ba’athists have managed to create an indebted layer of capitalists and petty capitalists, functionaries, military, etc., to which the SCP has wedded itself for a foothold in the trade union movement and limited seats in the Popular Front. Facing the global crisis this structure could no longer be sustained. The rotten bloc of the Popular Front crumbles under the mountain of the masses’ unfulfilled expectations. In Syria as in Brazil the program of the workers movement must be for the defeat of the capitalist government, for the formation of organs of workers self-rule, and construction of a workers state and government.

While no one will deny the popular nature of the uprisings in Brazil and Turkey, for some reason the popular uprising in Syria, we are told by every sectarian, is subordinated to both Western imperialist and theocratic forces; the Syrian people themselves are merely pawns - proxies of Washington, we are told, Riyadh and Doha. After decades of authoritarian semi-fascist crony capitalist rule, the people, we are to believe, are so easily swayed by the salvation offered either by “secular western democracy” or “14<sup>th</sup> century Islamic theocracy,” that they are

1 Or in the words of Cuban Assad apologists, a “media bubble.”



incapable of creating their own popular organizations on the ground, (by the thousand fold!) that answer neither to the influence of Wall Street nor the promises of Islamist theocracy, but only to the crushing weight of the crisis of capitalism, as imposed by the Ba'athist turn to neo-liberalism and the tug of war over resources and strategic positioning between US imperialism and emergent Chinese imperialism and their respective blocs.

Like in Yugoslavia and Libya, the imperialists are determined not to let popular or workers democracy emerge victorious and thus they seek a new more reliable agent from among of the sectors of the comprador capitalists. In Libya, imperialism sought trustworthy representatives among the Transitional National Council (TNC) as they do today among the Syrian National Council (SNC), Syrian Military Command (SMC) and Free Syrian Army (FSA). Yet finding and installing a new comprador over the organizational clout of the thousand plus militias is a wish more easily conjured than accomplished. The Syrian street is not a reliable ally of imperialism; that they are not getting the anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons they need is testament to the tenuous links between the CIA and the street fighters in Aleppo. The imperialists do not want to arm the populace and that is what the rebel forces are. Every bit of the imperialist "military aid pledged" so far (end of June 2013) turns out to be non-lethal. This does not surprise us.

An FSA announcement on June 21<sup>st</sup> that they had begun to receive weapons that would prove decisive overstates the case and conceals the fact that whatever these weapons may be, they are not numerous and they are not destined for the hands of the front line fighters. It is likely these armaments will ingratiate a capitalist layer of the opposition to western imperialism; no doubt that scenario has and will play out every time the masses in the semi-colonies attempt to self-assert against a despot. The task of the revolutionary worker is not to abandon the revolution but to champion the organization of the only force which can defeat imperialist intervention, the force of the workers councils and workers militia united in tactical alliance with popular militia to depose al-Assad and unite the nation and region to defeat imperialism, first and foremost imperialist military intervention and consequently and subsequently defeat imperialist economic subjugation. This requires that the revolution not stop at the imperialist-drawn borders, that the revolution unite the working masses of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), complete the tasks of the Arab national revolution through the agency of the working class, who will require more of the revolution than the national democratic revolution can achieve, thus pushing the revolution on to the social tasks. Only when the social tasks of the revolution are united with the national tasks can the latter be achieved because it is the social revolution alone, led by the working class, which has no material interest in maintaining amiable economic relations with imperialism.

While the West balked at arming the opposition for two years and still does(!), the Chinese/Russian emergent imperialist bloc had no hesitation in arming al-Assad. Zionist bomber sorties over Syria tested the skies for the "in the works," more aggressive "no-fly-zone" John McCain and the far right advocate. Hawkish pressure exists for repetition of the imperialist bombing of Panama, Belgrade, and Tripoli to stop one "mad-man." Bloomberg View columnist Jeffrey Goldberg reported that Secretary of State Kerry advocates an air campaign against al-Assad. So the west temporizes, weighing the cost-benefit of a massive air campaign against the potential of arming the people with weapons they will most certainly turn against Zionism

and imperialism. Thus the McCain and Kerry options gain buzz inside the beltway and among media spin doctors.

Exactly because modern warfare requires a high level of technological technique, we tell the masses to seize the necessary arms wherever and however they can; even if this involves political subterfuge and the confusion of sectarians in the USA. Trotsky's article "[Learn to Think](#)",<sup>1</sup> his example of the arming of the masses by imperialism for imperialism's purposes, was reprinted by our editorial board here ([redrave](#)). We recall that the most dangerous piece of armament that won the revolution in Russia, namely the person of V.I. Lenin, was allowed transit to the Finland station by German imperialism for its own purposes.



### **Learn to Think - Leon Trotsky (May 1938)**

*"Let us assume that rebellion breaks out tomorrow in the French colony of Algeria under the banner of national independence and that the Italian government, motivated by its own imperialist interests, prepares to send weapons to the rebels. What should the attitude of the Italian workers be in this case? I have purposely taken an example of rebellion against a democratic imperialism with intervention on the side of the rebels from a fascist imperialism. Should the Italian workers prevent the shipping of arms to the Algerians? Let any ultra-leftists dare answer this question in the affirmative. Every revolutionist, together with the Italian workers and the rebellious Algerians, would spurn such an answer with indignation. Even if a general maritime strike broke out in fascist Italy at the same time, even in this case the strikers should make an exception in favor of those ships carrying aid to the colonial slaves in revolt; otherwise they would be no more than wretched trade unionists – not proletarian revolutionists.*

*At the same time, the French maritime workers, even though not faced with any strike whatsoever, would be compelled to exert every effort to block the shipment of ammunition intended for use against the rebels. Only such a policy on the part of the Italian and French workers constitutes the policy of revolutionary internationalism.*

*Does this not signify, however, that the Italian workers moderate their struggle in this case against the fascist regime? Not in the slightest. Fascism renders "aid" to the Algerians only in order to weaken its enemy, France, and to lay its rapacious hand on her colonies. The revolutionary Italian workers do not forget this for a single moment. They call upon the Algerians not to trust their treacherous "ally" and at the same time continue their own irreconcilable struggle against fascism, "the main enemy in their own country". Only in this way can they gain the confidence of the rebels, help the rebellion and strengthen their own revolutionary position."*

No fly zones, sanctions, bombing, military intervention either covert or overt, are designed to assure an outcome favorable to the imperialists and crush the popular movement and must be opposed. Opposition to and defeat of imperialist forces is the primary obligation of revolutionary workers internationally. In Syria, that may at times require fighting a war on two fronts. Indeed, secular militias and revolutionaries have already had skirmishes with Islamists over the administration of the liberated zones. We say: always against imperialism(s) but never for Assad! Always against Assad but never with imperialism! Always against Assad and Imperialism but never for al-Nusra or al-Qaida! Always the working class for itself! For proletarian revolution, national and international and hence for a socialist federation of the Middle East!

Most left groups who either defend Assad or take no side in the war oppose US military intervention and will to varying degrees organize in the West to defend Syria from direct attack. Short of military attack they oppose the sending of arms to the opposition as the opposition is, for them, a proxy for imperialism. Their orientalism, euro-centrism and national Trotskyism blinds them to the role of the working class in leading the popular masses to defeat the capitalist forces of the counter-revolution, the theocratic reaction and imperialisms arrayed against the masses from all sides. Because two imperialist blocs have their plans and the crony capitalists of Syria have their plan, these are no reasons to abandon the popular uprising!

An interesting and very well done summary of the Syrian situation as a whole was written by the RCIT and can be found [here](#)<sup>2</sup>:

*“Imperialist propaganda seeks to present a picture of hopelessness in Syria and to present the only alternatives available to the Syrian masses as being support for one of the following:*

- \* Either Assad as he continues to slaughter his own people;*
- \* the Syrian pro-imperialists who are demanding a massive military intervention by the West;*
- \* or the forces controlled by Islamist reactionaries.*

*The revolutionary position is unequivocal: no political support for either pro-imperialists or Islamists. Instead we call for the masses of the Syrian people to stand united in a military front against the Assad regime together with all those who are currently struggling against him.*

### **Defeats for the Syrian Revolution**

*As these lines are being written, the Syrian army has launched a new offensive named “Northern Storm” which aims to take back complete control of the city of Aleppo and its environs. According to reports, Hezbollah forces are fighting alongside the Syrian regime, after having helped Assad to regain control of the strategic city Qusayr.*

*Currently, most of Aleppo is held by the rebels, while only a few areas remain under the control of the Syrian army. After taking control of Aleppo, the rebels have been trying to establish a buffer zone up to the Turkish border to help them move their forces and equipment. If the Syrian army manages to retake Aleppo, this would be a serious setback for the rebels who, in any case, suffer from a lack of weapons and material due to the repeated, still unfulfilled, proposals being considered in the West, particularly in the UK. Until now, no Western imperialist power has sent weapons to the rebels. Those reactionary Arab regimes, like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, who have and continue*

*to send arms to rebel forces, are supplying them to Islamists, whose sectarian politics greatly impede a successful struggle against the Syrian army.*

*At the same time, the Assad regime receives massive military support particularly from imperialist Russia but also from imperialist China and the reactionary Islamist regime in Iran.*

*The only solution to the difficult problems in Syria is a Socialist Revolution: Unless the working class assumes leadership of the Syrian masses in revolt, the revolution cannot be won. The current petty bourgeois rebel leaderships, with no program, strategy or tactics, are obviously unable to mobilize the whole working class and peasants irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation against the Assad dictatorship. But without such a broad mobilization and organization in popular councils and militias, it is impossible to defeat the Assad regime and replace it with a truly popular, workers’ and peasants government. To achieve this, the working class needs a revolutionary leadership, i.e. a revolutionary party.*

### **The difference between political and military support**

*Here it is important to clarify and emphasize the difference between political support for and military support for the rebels fighting against the Assad regime: Political support means taking the position that the establishment of a pro-imperialist or Islamic government would be a progressive, advantageous first step in the revolutionary struggle. By contrast, military support means attempting to achieve only military coordination between all forces fighting against the Syrian army, without ceasing a political struggle against the various rebel leaderships, the goal being the taking of power by the working class, and not the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie.*

*We want to bring down Assad, but do not want a pro-imperialist or Islamist regime in his place. Anyone who knows history knows that this was the line taken by the Bolsheviks in 1917, when they formed a joint military front with the Kerensky government against the revolt led by Kornilov, without giving any political support to the Kerensky government. Immediately after revolutionary forces defeated Kornilov, the Bolsheviks toppled the regime of Kerensky and his pro-imperialist partners in the October Revolution.*

### **Western or Israeli imperialist attack**

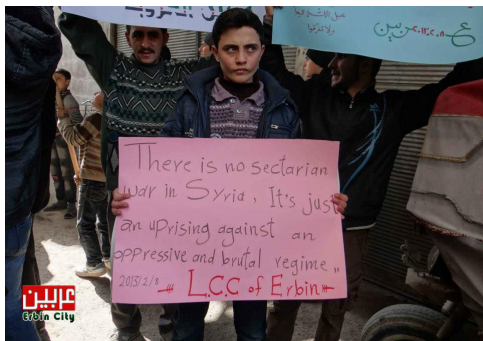
*If the Western imperialists, including Israel, attack Assad’s Syria, we will call for the rebels to fight on two fronts: one against Assad and the other against imperialism. How many forces should be dedicated to each front will depend on who is the more dangerous of the two enemies at any given moment. However, if Assad will fight the imperialist invasion and cease hostilities against the rebels, the latter can consider forming a military front with the Syrian regime against Imperialism. It is not a question of Assad’s being the “bad guy” and the rebel leaderships being the “good guys” or vice versa. Rather, what is vital at any given moment is to analyze the actual power relations and to act consistent with the derived conclusions.”*



## CLASS CHARACTER OF THE SYRIAN UPRISING

Every war has a class character and the Syrian cataclysm is no exception. The major forces of the left put the war in the context of a “progressive anti-imperialist bloc” manifested today in Syria as a Popular Front, the bloc of the Ba’ath Party and the Syrian Communist Party with Russia, China and Iran, and by extension the BRICS, Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia. The left claims they are facing down the US imperialist-sponsored uprising which has sustained itself for over two years, liberated whole areas and cities, and which has given birth to over a thousand separate militias fueled in the main by the Syrian street.

We watched the protest movement become a popular revolution, in which all anti-Assad forces contribute and compete for leadership. We see there is a class dynamic to the revolution. We affirm the working class has a side and that side is with the revolution against the semi-fascist Assad and with the nation against imperialist intervention, and with the Kurds against national oppression and in support of self-determination and with the exploited and oppressed against capitalism and imperialist subjugation. The task of the socialist is not to dismiss or ignore the revolution but to fight against the oppressor on every front, for class independence in matters of political alliances and formations and for joint tactical military action against whichever force poses the maximum threat to the revolution at any conjuncture (be they the state, imperialists or any of a variety of proxy forces).



Syria Freedom Forever website

Until 2011, workers generally did not dare exercise the right to strike, given the potential heavy penalties and repression of any activity deemed to be critical of the government. All this changed with the Arab Spring and especially the victories of the masses over Mubarak and Gadhafi. In Egypt and Libya particularly after the fall of Gadhafi the open military conflict is suspended, but the class warfare has not been decided and continues apace. In this circumstance, the Syrian workers objectively joined a mass democratic revolutionary movement that swept the whole Mediterranean rim. For revolutionary Marxism the victory of the MENA workers in their democratic revolution is not assured unless they can break out onto the socialist revolutionary road, finish with the bourgeois state and organize a revolutionary regime of their own. The workers chose their side.

Very soon after the rise of the protest movement the workers chose their side and it was the side of the revolution. The workers did not wait for official approval which never would be forthcoming from their

bureaucratic and state-integrated leaderships.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in spite of their official leaderships, and we maintain they could hardly do otherwise. Marxism sees the class struggle within every mass struggle and we are obligated to accentuate the class dynamic, and do everything, as the Transitional Program says, to elevate the general level of militancy of the working class and to encourage it to take all power and advance the revolution beyond national boundaries. Like the Syrian workers we have taken a side and it is their side. In this treatment we will show how our major opponent tendencies abandon the working class, disparage the spontaneously organized democratic organs of the base of the masses' revolution, and adapt to alien class pressures in the form of Stalinist, stagists' theoretical schemas.

According to [refworld](http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fd8892221.html)<sup>3</sup>

*“Sporadic protests first began on 26 January with mass demonstrations erupting in March. The situation quickly developed into a national uprising, with protesters demanding the government of President Bashar al-Assad and the ruling Ba’athist Party step down...However 2011 was marked by a series of general strikes, which started in March, and which formed a major part of the protests against the repression of fundamental rights and the lack of decent jobs and prospects for the future. Opposition protestors called nationwide general strikes for 18 May, 23 June and 11 December. In addition, there were general strikes in the city of Hama between 3 and 5 June and in the cities of Homs and Hama on 7 July. The majority of these strikes, calling for an end to repression were met with violence, injury and often killings.”*

Out of the protests came the repression then the general strikes and more repression. The historic response of the masses to an oppressive state which allows no means of redress is that the people form their own democratic organs of governance and self defense. The Local Coordinating Committees (LCC's), which grew out of the general strikes are extensively reported on and represented at [Syria Freedom Forever](http://www.syriafreedomforever.org).<sup>4</sup> They are the revolutionary component of the uprising, they emerge directly from the Syrian streets—from the masses and they are the product of the general strikes. They are the people organized in the face of state repression. The LCC's are not classical working class organs but they have been formed by the revolution of the masses. The claim that the LCC's are the product of American CIA agents and that they are funded by imperialist “Friends of Syria” is ludicrous. As reported by the [McClatchy Papers](http://www.mcclatchypapers.com)<sup>5</sup> on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013 the US State Department “is confused on the subject” of where the first \$127,000,000 of the total pledged \$800,000,000 is exactly ([State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki](http://www.state.gov/record/2013/06/20130620_1270000000)).<sup>6</sup>

On June 24<sup>th</sup> the [Syria freedom forever blog](http://www.syriafreedomforever.org)<sup>7</sup> explodes the myths that the western flow of arms is robust and aims toward victory to the revolution:

*“The objectives in the recent shipment of weapons, relatively small still, is by no means to allow the victory of the Syrian revolution but to move toward a balance of power, which is far from being achieved and guaranteed actually given the massive aid provided by Iran and Russia to the criminal regime of Assad but just to allow the revolutionaries to survive and push them to accept an agreement with the regime.”*

2 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fd8892221.html> “Official Trade union rejects protests: The official government-controlled trade union centre (GFTU) has not been involved in the recent strikes but has followed the official government line in describing the reform movement as a conspiracy”

The revolutionaries at [Syria Freedom Forever](#)<sup>8</sup> see right through the fakery, hypocrisy and ineffectuality of the conditions imperialism seeks to impose with the proposed Geneva 2. They expose the conditions and counter them by charting a course for democratic revolution-self organization of the masses-against Assad, imperialism, opportunists and Islamist theocrats who seek to usurp the revolution.

*“The G8 countries (USA, Russia, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, UK) demanded as well the Syrian authorities and the opposition to “undertake a joint commitment” at the future peace conference in Geneva “to destroy and drive out of Syria all organizations and individuals affiliated with Al-Qaeda and all other organizations involved in terrorism.” The only way to stop the terrorism and the use of sectarianism by both the Syrian regime and groups linked to al Qaeda is the continuation of the revolution until the downfall of the regime and the victory of the masses for the objectives of the uprising: Freedom and Social Justice. **The only way to defeat these evils is the empowerment and the self-organization of the popular classes and not agreements made by imperialist powers, the criminal regime, and an opportunist section of the Syrian opposition at the expense of the revolutionary masses. It is in the liberated regions of Syria, which got rid of the regime, that we have seen growing and increasing opposition to Jabhat al Nusra and similar reactionary groups.**(emphasis ours ed.) It is not to say that this is a mechanical phenomenon, but it is clear that the overthrow of the regime and the strengthening of self-organizations of the masses is the best way to build a society based on freedom and dignity and that can oppose reactionary and authoritarian groups.”*

One wonders what is at the material root of the chauvinism, orientalism and lack of confidence in the masses’ intelligence, ingenuity and burning desire for justice, that drives much of the left to paternalistically dismiss the ability of the masses to guide the revolution once it defeats Assad to continue to the complete defeat of the opportunists, Islamists and imperialists. We see that there is a layer of leftists, “fake socialists,” whose orientation to the labor aristocracy has distorted their perspective with the pragmatism of the labor aristocrat, who for a few extra crumbs turns and adopts the ideology of the ruling class; which is, that the workers themselves are incapable of self-rule or of winning their revolution. We have nothing in common with people who think this way and call for the complete defeat of such labor lieutenants of capital.

## THE SYRIAN OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS

For Marxism, the objective conditions (what is) determine the material and social forces which exist, what their interests are and how those forces advance or hinder the advance of the workers prospects for socialism. To understand where Syria is today a brief background is required.

An indigenous capitalism developed under the French mandate, according to historian Geoffrey D. Schad, whose [study](#)<sup>9</sup> centered on the development of the industrial center in Aleppo in the 1930’s. Syria developed a highly centralized industrial textile center in Aleppo, out of which grew a native industrial capitalist class and an industrial working class. The capitalist class expanded (was made up of all sects) and competed against regional capital rather than European. These classes displayed many features similar to those which developed in

the West between 50 and 75 years earlier. The workers organizations transitioned from guild-like organizations to mutual benefit syndicates of workers and owners and eventually to the formation of industrial unions, some Communist-led and some independent. By 1938 an illegal federation of workers organizations was formed out of the fight for the 8-hour day, the right to strike, etc. Schad goes on to emphasize that the unique character of the Syrian working class is the class fluidity within one’s lifetime. Due the level and relatively recent development of industry, many workers straddled class stratifications moving back and forth from industrial worker to artisan/small shop or factory owner.

Adam Davidson’s NYT article [“The Syria Paradox”](#)<sup>10</sup> provides useful background:

*“Syria’s economy is, within the context of the Middle East, unusually diverse. Agriculture, which employs roughly half the rural population, contributes around 20 percent to gross domestic product. Oil represents another 25 percent. Before the crisis, tourists — especially Arabs, but also some Europeans and the occasional American — visited its beautiful, ancient cities and seaside towns. While it has never been a major global player in manufacturing, Syria has a modest industrial sector that churns out clothes, packaged foods, beverages and, lately, inexpensive cars. Lastly, the country has major phosphate deposits, a mineral that’s in increasing demand as a fertilizer.*

*When the Baath Party took command of Syria in 1963, its leaders intended to centralize control of the economy....But it didn’t work. The Alawite ethnic and religious minority, which eventually assumed leadership of the party, was made up of poorly educated people from mountain villages who “knew nothing about running a country or an economy,” says Joshua Landis, a pre-eminent Syria watcher and a professor at the University of Oklahoma. The Alawites, he notes, had been given a role by the French colonial government in the military precisely because they had few ties to the majority Sunnis in the big cities: “They were very unsophisticated, and they didn’t have a deep community of cosmopolitan people from which to draw.”*

*So Hafez al-Assad, father of the current president, allowed a handful of wealthy Sunni and Christian businesspeople to continue running their own factories, shops and restaurants. His son, Bashar, came to power in 2000 and opened up the country a bit more, allowing entrepreneurs with no regime connections to start their own businesses (as long as they gave the government a cut).*

*There’s even a modest stock market now, the Damascus Securities Exchange, where wealthy Syrians can buy shares in a couple dozen companies, most of them banks or insurance firms.*

*This entrepreneurial openness in the cities, however, coincided with a multiyear drought, which has made the miserable conditions of Syria’s farmers even worse. Those who couldn’t make ends meet in the fields moved to crowded suburban slums or to poorer, second-tier cities. The uprisings began in these areas, and they’re where most of the violence is today.*

*And even though the urban elite may not like the Assad regime, and even though they realize that life would be better in a country that doesn’t stifle free expression or support radical political elements in neighboring Lebanon, they’re afraid of what their lives would look like in a revolution’s chaotic aftermath.”*

The crisis of capitalism, the neo-liberal program of the Ba’athists and



the environmental crisis combined explosively. Bassam Haddad's writing on [The Political Economy of Syria: Realities and Challenges](#)<sup>11</sup> explains that despite weathering the global financial crisis, demand for Syrian-made industrial products crashed, falling 80% between 2008 and 2009. Chinese imports made it very difficult for Syrian firms to compete. The public sector is the largest employer and in 2010 the government pursued a policy of creating public-private partnerships. Yet these partnerships were often a "Mask for privatization." The government's plans to reform the public sector include converting state-owned enterprises into corporate-like companies with independent budgets, something that could potentially relieve public coffers from having to support inefficient public enterprises. By the summer of 2010, fewer than 10 percent of the 260 public enterprises were profitable. Hindering the entrepreneurial capitalists' ability to compete on large projects is a risk-averse national banking system which leaves the biggest projects to Rami Makhlef, one of the biggest business moguls in the country, whose empire was built on connections to the regime and al-Assad's family. The GDP increases have not been shared equitably among the people. Oil production is peaking or declining; unemployment was over 10%, poverty had increased 10% between 2005 and 2010; water access per person was below the global scarcity mark by 2/3rds, drought affected 2-3 million, driving many off the land and into the cities and villages and into poverty.

It is in the context of this capitalist exploitation that Dr. [Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm](#),<sup>12</sup> described life in Damascus in the period leading up to the revolution:

*"...for example, looks quiet, normal, and monotonous on the surface, however, you could feel and be certain that volcanic lava was brewing underneath, which everyone was trying to ignore as much as possible, in the hope that it will remain below the surface for as long as possible and not float quickly to daily life in the country. When the revolution erupted, it broke this contradiction between the quiet, normal appearance on the surface that was a falsity, on the one hand, and the real volcano that was brewing underneath on the other."*

#### STALINIST TRADE UNIONS

The General Federation of Trade Unions, set up during the French mandate after the 1938 general strike, did not win the right to strike until after independence (i.e., after 1946.) Following the 1959 union with Egypt, strict Egyptian laws afforded workers sick leave and notice prior to layoffs, while banning strikes and mandating a single labor organization connected to the ruling party. When in 1963 the Ba'athists took control of the union federation, purges assured party control. The integration of the trade union movement was then codified. The 1968 trade union law (Law No.84 of June 26) "redefined the trade unions, not as independent organizations working for workers' welfare and rights, but as popular organizations, mobilizing people for national tasks." The law set up Stalinist-inspired "Workers' Production Councils" mimicking Stakhanovism. Alternate union Federations or independent unions were made illegal. Those unions sanctioned by the state were put under strict state scrutiny. Within the confines of state control, the unions functioned to transmit complaints and pressure in a strictly economist manner as regards local conditions. When workers did take industrial action in 1979 in the Rumeila oil fields, the state conceded on wages but then cracked down on communist Printer Union leader Omar Qashash and other dissidents in retaliation. [[James Paul Human Rights in Syria](#)]<sup>13</sup> Subsequent independently-led strike waves were shut down and militants were brutally repressed. There

would be no room for independent working class economic or political action outside the control of the ruling party.

The Syrian Communist Party (SCP), in September of 1974 joined with the Ba'ath Party and the Arab Socialist Union to form the Progressive National Front, and trade union militants were to learn their role as a loyal and subservient "opposition."

The UK [SWP reports](#)<sup>14</sup> an article published in the SCP Weekly which explains that the Syrian labor unions:

*"have been satisfied with criticizing the economic policies, and have done detailed studies about the direction of the economic process and the damages it has caused, but they did not resort to labor strikes or other forms of protest. They have done so based on the principle of "political unionism," which avoids the struggle of the working class and its positive resistance against its exploiters. This has reinforced the power of the owners and capitalists, who have found in the current laws and the current operating principles a barrier which prevents the working class from exercising its legitimate rights."*

To which they add, "...In fact, the SCP, as an adjunct to the ruling Ba'ath Party, may oppose this barrier to the class struggle rhetorically, but the party has done nothing to fight against it."

The SCP, not so much to distance itself from the Ba'athists, but to display some semblance of purpose, point to the neo-liberalism of the al-Assad years as a mistake and source of economic pressure. But these are reformist "communists," with their quarter of a million members they serve the Ba'ath Party as a left cover to contain the workers and provide a showcase of democracy, in exchange for privileges derived from their seats in the popular front government and in the trade union movement.

By early 2011 unemployment in Syria was around 30%. The country had been living under "State of Emergency" since 1963. With the pressure on from the Arab Spring, the pressure cooker of political repression, the unfinished tasks of the Arab national revolution, the unresolved crisis of the Palestinians and Golan, compounded by a devastating drought, Syria was ripe for rebellion. Feeling the pressure, al-Assad lifted the "State of Emergency" in April. The missing element for a successful uprising was a revolutionary workers leadership organized in its party. The ¼ million strong Communist Party, committed to the "Progressive National Front", was in no position to lead the workers to power against the capitalist Ba'athist regime. Today Syria pays the price for this betrayal, a betrayal based in the Stalinist retreat from Bolshevism to the two-stage theory of revolution which elevated the "anti-imperialist" content of the semi-colonial bourgeoisies' self-determination above the proletarian fight for internationalist socialism, which alone can accomplish the defeat of imperialism and the unfinished tasks of the Arab national revolution.

**NO THIS IS NOT A SECTARIAN CIVIL WAR, THIS IS THE FLASH POINT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CLASS WAR!**

[John Wuthnow](#),<sup>15</sup> a China analyst writes that in 2011 China ranked as Syria's number one trading partner ahead of Russia. Exports of "...\$2.4 billion included communications and electronic equipment, heavy machinery...." The China National Petroleum Corporation holds interest in Syria's two largest oil firms and Sinochem owns a "...50% stake in one of the largest oil fields. When the embargo was

put on Syria in 2011 China stepped up its crude purchases to offset the losses....”

The Chinese exports to Syria are paltry compared to the [\\$382 billion](#)<sup>16</sup> worth of goods that they export to Europe in a year. However this has not prevented China from joining Russia in vetoing U.N. Security Council sanction resolutions.

At the June 13<sup>th</sup> press briefing, the State Department was asked if the U.S. sends arms won't the Russians just double their arms supplies to Assad? But behind arms is the money. China does this to protect investment because China and Russia are partners in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and while China is reluctant to take Iran into the SCO Russia wants Iran in it as a full member. China is the force that could make Geneva 2 take place, but there is no evidence that they want to do this.

Western leftists who have abandoned the class analysis in this conflict tell the workers to pack it up and sit this one out (CWI, ICL, HWSR and the IBT).<sup>3</sup> As if they could! They say in the fight between the Syrian Street and al-Assad the workers have no side. They equate the rebellion and the street militias directly with the mouthpieces of the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) sitting out the war in air-conditioned hotel rooms, begging for funds and promising that which they do not have to the imperialists. But the revolution does not depend on these sects' wishes or commandments, the revolution does not ask the workers if they are ready or if they want to sit this one out until after the intermission! The revolution and counter-revolution arrive delivered on the back of the international crisis of capitalism! And if the workers are not prepared, do not have their revolutionary party and their defense organizations ready, the counter-revolution spares no powder and yields no breathing space. They know their history and act as their class and imperialism dictates! The intersection of declining US/European imperialism and the emergent Russian/Chinese imperialist bloc forces the Syrian masses into the first battles of WW3, which will have the dual character of being an inter-imperialist war to re-divide the world's resources and a war of both imperialist blocs against the proletarian revolution, which first erupts in its democratic phase against the comprador bourgeois regimes.

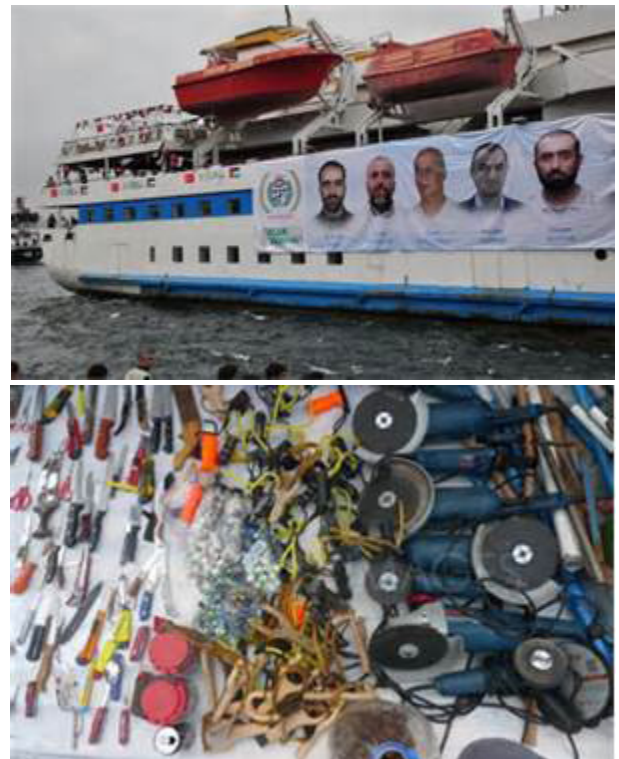
Dr. [Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm](#)<sup>17</sup> also observes the left's flawed method:

*“Whereas the smaller bloc of the left has hardened its old positions, as if nothing happened after the end of the Cold War, and with time its attitudes and methods became of the same nature as that of the Taliban-Jihadis or dogmatic closed-minded sectarians, or even that of terrorist “Bin Ladenites,” in its blind defiance of the West, global capitalism (a global capitalism that Russia and China are now a part of) and imperialism. This bloc from the left, in the Arab world and internationally, is today the most hostile to the Syrian revolution and the closest to defending the tyrannical military-security-familial regime using several arguments, not least of which is that the entire world plotted, apparently, against this regime that is peace-loving and stable. This type of leftist emphasizes “the game of nations” and “geopolitical analysis,” with stories of collision of interests and*

*plans of the great powers and their dominance in our region, and does not want to view the revolution in Syria through anything other than through this lens, and neglects all that happens inside Syria and to Syria's revolutionaries today, as well as ignoring all the reasons that led its people to a peaceful revolution, and later to taking up arms in the face of a “nationalist” tyranny that is allied with this kind of leftist. In other words, this leftist has no problem with sacrificing Syria if it leads to a victory being handed to their international camp and “geopolitics” that wants a global victory in the “game of nations.” Their first priority is not Syria or its people in revolt to restore the republic, their freedom, and their dignity, but the game of nations at the global level of analysis and the side that they want to win.”*

Syria is not separate; it is effected by and integral to the dysfunctionality of the imperialist division of MENA and the unfinished tasks of the Arab democratic revolution, which the Stalinists and the popular front agreed to limit when they made their separate peace with imperialism.

### THE TURKISH DIMENSION



**Supposed weapons found on Mavi Marmara**

Turkey has wanted to be the indispensable regional player for NATO since before the fall of Mubarak. Indeed with the Israeli attack on the Mavi Marmara, Turkey wanted to appear to chart its own independent diplomatic course. Turkey wants to appear to be the reasonable Muslim country. Turkey wants membership in the European Union. A *de facto* ally of Israel, they look at the Syrian revolutionary struggle as an opportunity to gain at Iran's expense. In the Western imperialist scheme of things they want to be what England was in WW2 or what Japan was during Korea, particularly in the event of expansion of the Syrian war. So Turkey pursues a Kurdish policy that is part repression and part *modus vivendi*. They have worked this out with Iraq and therefore will let the Iraqi-Kurdish pipeline from the Mosul area go to a Turkish port on the Mediterranean. This disturbs Baghdad, which is why Baghdad allows Iran to use Iraqi airspace to bring Iranian arms

3 An astonishingly bad example of this is the position of the IBT [http://www.bolshevik.org/1917/no34/ibt\\_1917\\_34\\_04\\_wsm\\_on\\_libya.html](http://www.bolshevik.org/1917/no34/ibt_1917_34_04_wsm_on_libya.html)



to al-Assad.

***We will not be thrown by sectarians who say the revolution can go forward in Turkey but not in Syria!***

Impressionistic leftists retail the falsehood that the militias are all Islamists and that the Sunni are attacking the Kurds. This is absurd and simplistic. There are Kurds on Assad's side who have made their break from the PKK on account of its peace deal with Erdogan. And there are Kurds who support the uprising. It appears the majority of the Kurdish forces are on the side of the uprising.

#### **FOR A SOCIALIST KURDISTAN!**

The Kurds, which represent about 20% of the population of Syria are an oppressed nationality with their own language, culture and territory that have faced oppression at the hands of the capitalist regimes of the region. Kurdistan encompasses contiguous territory in Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq and the CIS, where Kurds make up local majorities and anywhere from 10-25% of the population of those countries. Approximately two million Kurds live in Syrian Kurdistan. As throughout the other Middle Eastern countries, the Kurds in Syria have faced oppression for decades, treated as second class citizens where they have been killed, imprisoned and persecuted. 500,000 Kurds were denied citizenship by the Syrian state. They could not travel abroad, own property or enroll in school.

As the Syrian Revolution began in 2011, the Assad regime was forced to withdraw troops from Kurdish areas in order to divert units elsewhere. This allowed a lot of political autonomy for the Kurds in Syria. The Kurds initially held back from participation in the uprising against Assad, but have recently become more involved in the opposition. The Kurds, as an oppressed national minority, were initially wary of the revolution, as it was dominated by Syria's Sunni Arab majority, and they perceived that they would be as oppressed under a Sunni Arab government as under an Alawite Shia regime. Some are pro-Assad because they are alienated by the PKK's suspension of the armed struggle against the Erdogan regime in Turkey. But many more support the Syrian opposition, particularly militias and LCC's that have no problem with a Kurdistan and are not insisting on the territorial integrity of a Syria whose borders were drawn by a committee of imperialists as a colonial mandate of the League of Nations. Kurds have recently been in open combat with Islamists like Jabat al-Nusra who see Syria as a "Muslim nation," which is to say a Sunni nation to be defended as such within the imperialist borders of 1921, which they accept. For Jabat al-Nusra, the territorial integrity of Syria is a feature of their proposed New Caliphate, a concept and project they have in common with al-Qaeda. Needless to say, Jabat al-Nusra is in continuous conflict with many other revolutionary militias. Internationally Kurds have been prominent in demonstrations outside the Syrian Embassies. And Kurdish cities such as Qamishli, Seri Kaniya and Amuda, and others had demonstrations.<sup>18</sup>

The murder of Kurdish activist Mashaal Tammo in October of 2011, most likely at the hands of the forces of Assad, provoked outrage with 50,000 mourners marching through the streets of Qamishli. The funeral procession was fired on by Syrian Security forces and five were killed. This led to widespread calls from Kurdish leaders in the community to join the uprising against Assad. "My father's

assassination is the screw in the regime's coffin," Fares Tammo, Mashaal's son, told the New York Times. "They made a big mistake by killing my father."

The Kurdish question is a strategic question for the working masses of the Near East. The open and forthright defense of the democratic right of self-determination for the Kurds to form their own nation would go a long way towards advancing the revolution against Assad and the other oppressive bourgeois and monarchist regimes in the region. For the Syrian masses to link their struggle to the struggle of the Kurds would not only bolster the opposition to Assad, but be a means of uniting all the workers and peasants of the region against imperialism and their own bourgeois regimes; linking the struggles from Iran to Iraq to Turkey and beyond.

The Syrian revolutionary struggle when led by a mass party of Marxist worker revolutionists can resolve every organizational contradiction and put the Palestinian proletariat in the driver's seat of the Palestinian revolution for the first time. Then a revolutionary unity of the MENA working class becomes an eminently practical possibility and with it the possibility of a victorious Arab revolution and the elimination of the Israeli colonial settler state. The revolutionary Kurdish struggle while securing its southern flank can make the Turkish and Syrian revolutionary struggle the worker's path to power to the Greek workers and through Greece to the European proletariat. A revolutionary workers party in Syria would stand for unconditional support for the popular uprising against the Assad regime, with the perspective to advance it to the establishment of a workers and peasants government based on councils and militias. Such a party would raise the call for unconditional support for the national liberation struggle of the Kurdish people in all countries, with the perspective to advance it to the establishment of an independent socialist Kurdistan. **No one is going to build a mass revolutionary party by abstention from the struggles of the masses. Building the party requires fighting for the revolutionary program in every arena so as to become, as Lenin said, the tribune of all the people.**<sup>19</sup>

The Hezbollah appearance by the side of Assad's forces does not mean war for generations, nor does it preclude all models of rebel victory, but it does make the rise of a workers' revolutionary leadership more urgent. The revolutionary Marxist program, once widely embraced, will finish off the civil war by deciding most peoples' sympathies against the regime and the bourgeois social order. But meanwhile the combination of Hezbollah support for Assad and Geneva 2 could impose an internationally approved formula on Syria irrespective of the real disposition of and relation of forces in arms on the ground. The imperialists could pronounce the left and democratic revolutionary fighters outlaws, and this would multiply the fighters' difficulties and make them look like recalcitrants and bandits to those liberals who have some sympathy for them now. Of course the traitors in the ranks of the labour movement internationally who have already decided that revolutionaries are imperialist proxies will provide a left cover for the imperialist counter-revolution.

#### **THE TRAITORS IN THE RANKS**

"First and foremost," the Syrian Communist Party (SCP) tells us, "... the course of events in Syria is neither a revolution [and] [not a civil war](#)....It is not possible for us to define a process where NATO has been

involved as a revolution.”<sup>20</sup>

Following the theoretical lead of the SCP the neo-Stalinist US-based [Party for Socialism and Liberation](#)<sup>21</sup> elevates the defense of the capitalist nationalist regime above the “legitimate” grievances of the masses:

*“The conflict in Syria that began more than two years ago was **fueled by a wide range of grievances, some legitimate, some reactionary.** (our emphasis) But the armed rebellion inside the country is today inextricably bound to imperialism and the most reactionary regimes in the Arab world. Its aim is to destroy a secular, nationalist government that U.S. leaders view as an obstacle to their goal of dominating the entire Middle East.”*

What keeps this from being a “[real civil war](#),” we are instructed by the similarly neo-Stalinist, US-based Workers World Party, “...is the complete takeover of the opposition movement by foreign imperialist powers.”<sup>22</sup>

Ernesto Rodriguez, among delegates from the [Cuban Workers Trade Union Central](#)<sup>23</sup> (CTC), visited Damascus in December of 2012 and reported...

*“For me it was quite clear that **the Syrian opposition is above all a media bubble.** We did not find one single person who favored foreign intervention; everyone see[s] their images reflected in the mirror of what happened in Libya...each popular demonstration and each billboard we saw became a real proof of the support given to Bashar-Al-Assad, who is also fully supported by the Federation of Syrian Trade Unions”.*<sup>24</sup>

The Stalinists, neo-Stalinists, Castroists, Bolivarians, Russians and Chinese side with al-Assad and dismiss the rebellion as a conspiracy of US/UK/French imperialism, leaning on muscle from Zionism and al-Qaida.(!) For the Stalinist SCP, al-Assad’s family and Ba’ath Party rule is an acceptable local variant of the Arab national bourgeois-democratic anti-imperialist stage of the revolution (!), a partner in the popular front government, which serves as a way station for those whose stagist theory of social progress guides them to join, participate in and defend the capitalist state and abandon the socialist revolution. Thus the popular front that is formed by the SCP, al-Assad, Russia and China is inextricably linked to the role of emergent Chinese Imperialism in its popular front with the capitalist restorationists of Havana, who are strangling the Latin American Revolution and to the African National Congress (ANC), which strangles the South African revolution.

These advocates for this “progressive anti-imperialist popular front” dismiss, belittle or ignore the historic crimes of their partner in the popular front, the Ba’ath party, which, rather than being an enemy of imperialism, has done its part to advance the interests of the Syrian bourgeoisie over those of the Syrian, Arab and multi-ethnic workers across MENA. They act to contain the Syrian working class and the Palestinian revolution. The Syrian workers are constrained through strict state control of the trade unions, assisted and enforced by the SCP. At the same time the Palestinians have been mere political pawns for the regime. They continued to experience a whole series of betrayals by the Ba’ath Party and SCP. Witness the August, 2011 Syrian naval bombardment of Palestinian camps in [Latakia](#),<sup>25</sup> the killing of

hundreds of Palestinians by the Syrian Air Force at the [Yarmouk](#)<sup>26</sup> refugee camp last year, and these horrors follow decades of deals with US imperialism, such as in August of 1975 when [Jordan and Syria](#)<sup>27</sup> linked forces in a joint command to reign in the PLO; and later, in 1976, when [30,000 Syrian](#) “peace keeping” troops intervened in Lebanon to crush the Palestinian military advances.<sup>28</sup> It is no surprise these fake communists quickly develop amnesia about the historic alliance with US imperialism, when al-Assad opened his [torture chambers](#) from 2001-2004 for CIA extraordinary rendition, secret detention and “enhanced interrogation techniques.”<sup>29</sup>

Their method results in the abandonment of the socialist revolution in the semi-colonies. Any uprising against a “progressive-bourgeois-democratic-anti-imperialist” capitalist government in the semi-colonies cannot, **by their definition**, be the re-invigoration of the democratic revolution (it already holds state power they say) leading the masses through experience down the road to socialist revolution via the logic of the permanent revolution. No, for this section of the left, uprisings of the oppressed and exploited against authoritarian semi-fascist regimes, when sustained and militant, can only be the product of the CIA and western imperialism. In this case, presumably the Syrian street erupted to act out the plan of the Project for a New American Century Document<sup>30</sup> (with just one twist-- it is being done in alliance with al-Qaida, whom the US is fighting in Afghanistan, droning in Yemen and the French are fighting in Mali!)

The ostensibly “revolutionary” ICL (Spartacist) and other fake and renegade Trotskyists run from the uprising of the oppressed. They formally recognize the reactionary nature of the regime and from the formula book they find a way to chart an independent course for the workers against NATO and US imperialist attack, but seem to have lost the playbook on how to fight a war on two fronts. They do not recognize the Syrian working class as the subjective factor, the key to unlocking the permanent revolution in MENA.<sup>31</sup>

They [observe](#) the spread of the MENA uprisings and the repression that followed:

*“The civil war grew out of a series of demonstrations in the provincial city of Dara’a in Syria’s southern Sunni region in March 2011 as “Arab Spring” protests were sweeping North Africa and the Near East. The demonstrations spread beyond Dara’a, and the Assad regime murderously unleashed troops and tanks on civilians. Increasing numbers of soldiers defected, forming the core of an array of anti-government militias. Key commanders of this so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) were for years part of the Assad regime’s repressive machinery.”*

Yet following the repression they abandon the uprising:

*“Revolutionary Marxists support neither side in this civil war, in which a victory of one combatant or the other would do nothing to further the cause of the working class and the oppressed. However, workers internationally **do** have a side in opposing military intervention by the imperialists. In the event of imperialist attack, we would stand for the defense of Syria while maintaining proletarian political opposition to Assad’s bloodsoaked rule.”*

Ignoring the dynamics of the revolution, the ICL and their ilk accept the al-Assad and imperialist propaganda that the rebellion is owned lock, stock and barrel by the émigré bourgeoisie allied to imperialism,



the military deserters and the Islamist militias, predominantly Sunni (the majority population of Syria,) backed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The ICL states the workers of the world have a side against imperialist attack while “maintaining proletarian political opposition to Assad’s blood-soaked rule.” What exactly this proletarian political opposition to Assad’s rule entails for the residents of Qusayr, Aleppo, Homs or any of the villages and cities under Assad’s bombardment the ICL does not say? The ICL tells militant workers to take action against military intervention by the imperialists, yet they do not call for workers to stop the “bloodsoaked” assault of the Ba’athists and Hezbollah on the people! The ICL have nothing to offer the Syrian street, whom they freely admit al-Assad provoked into picking up the gun in self defense.

Darth Nader [Darth Nader](#)<sup>32</sup> writes on his blog:

*“The situation in Syria .... is a civil war in that both sides involved are from the same country and fighting against each other (although, as in Spain, there are internationals fighting on both sides, notably, Iranians and Hezbollah militants with the Assad regime, and foreign Sunni jihadists with the opposition). It is a proxy war in that each side in the civil war has foreign state backers (Iran and Russia for Assad, the West and the GCC states for the opposition). And, finally, it is a revolution in that a large percentage of the population wishes to overthrow the regime and replace it with another. But it also is a social revolution, in that we have seen an unprecedented eruption of the “Syrian street,” whereby the elite no longer holds a monopoly on art and culture.”*

[Ghayath born](#)<sup>33</sup> at Syria Freedom Forever reports:

*“This revolution is a genuine popular revolution, the driving forces are the social workers and the wider social strata urban and rural impoverished. These have been created, despite the incredible violence of the regime, a popular armed resistance in the absence of dramatic political revolutionary leadership. They feature self-organizing bodies, coordination, and embryos of self-government, local councils and civil advice organs. These forms of control and administration by the bottom are more developed in the Syrian revolution in any process other countries in the region.”*<sup>34</sup>

Revolutionary Marxism sees the dual character of the war (revolutionary, civil & proxy), the various sides in the war and takes a side! The war was initiated by a counter-revolutionary semi-fascist regime which would not tolerate a spread of the Arab Spring, knowing a popular revolution would threaten the Syrian capitalist class tightly linked to the al-Assad family. The unfinished tasks of the Arab national revolution and the layers of privilege and access have created an “out” bourgeoisie which is driven to the side of the rebellion and embraces the émigré bourgeoisie and western imperialism, in contradistinction to their Syrian class brothers who embrace the rising imperialist bloc of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO-Russia & China).

In a struggle between the people and an authoritarian semi-fascist, crony capitalist comprador regime, Revolutionary Marxism marches against the regime and charts a course for workers’ self-organization every time! And in a war between a semi-colony and an imperialist nation or bloc of nations historical materialism demands the workers defend the semi-colony against imperialism, as the defeat of imperialism anywhere advances the workers fight for liberation everywhere. Western imperialism is trying to crush the popular component of the

revolution and put it under the control of a new bourgeois fraction. Chinese/Russian imperialism seeks to keep Syria in their orbit to stymie the further advance of the Arab National revolution, for its strategic location on the Mediterranean, for the sake of the status-quo keeping the Arab regimes in check with Israel, and in the last analysis for its oil and trade. The battle of the two imperialisms over the turf obliges the workers to fulfill their task to lead the popular mass against exploitation, oppression, and sectarianism by driving the class wedge of proletarian independence into the revolution. All the oppressed rise up in the popular revolution. When the Ba’athist regime is driven out the limits of each class’ program will be tested before the eyes of the masses.

Academics like Dr. [Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm](#)<sup>35</sup> chart the course toward the popular front with a new fraction of a pro-imperialist bourgeoisie writing off the prospect of workers power...

*“... when the reconstruction and rebuilding process gets underway... the Syrian capitalist and the Syrian bourgeois in general will proceed to take over this process and invest in it and dominate it. And Syria will most probably witness the rise of personalities and magnates and new leaderships from these bourgeois circles pursuant of the continuation and expansion of the process. Thus, I believe that the Islam which will surface is a “business” Islam, and the Islam of businessmen, entrepreneurs and traders that is different from the political Islam we fear for its intransigent strictness in the midst of this ongoing battle. In this kind of expected climate, the hardline Islamic currents will be absorbed by and diluted in the sea of popular and traditional Islam as well as by the typical Syrian business-Islam. That is to say that Syria is not suitable for the dominance of a kind of Islam that bans education and burns schools and closes universities and paralyzes institutions and denies a woman her right to education and productive work. If we can manage to lead the revolution to the voting poll in relative security, I don’t think that any of the Political Islamic currents in Syria will manage to sweep the results of the elections as they did in Egypt or Tunisia.*

#### PACIFISTS POSING AS TROTSKYISTS

Steven Argue is a member of the self-styled [Revolutionary Tendency](#) of the Socialist Party (USA), a neo-Muste outfit whose overarching principle is not revolution but non-violence. Argue goes one step further than the ICL, which is generally more careful than Steven in its reporting, and quotes many questionable sources to shriek what he calls a Sunni-led, imperialist-backed **“genocide” and counter-revolution**.<sup>36</sup> He echoes Mark [Osborn](#), of the Association for Workers Liberty (AWL)<sup>37</sup> whose tendency retreats from the revolution, recoiling from a list of tit-for-tat human rights violations. Unlike Osborne of the AWL, which acknowledges al-Assad authoritarianism and brutality, Argue leans exclusively on moral argument against supporting the rebels for their “crimes of genocide.” Like the neo-Stalinists he conflates defense of the semi-colonial peoples against imperialism **with defense of the Assad and similar regimes**. No doubt Argue supports the AWL conclusion that “... ‘victory’ for the Syrian opposition’ as a general slogan now has a real meaning that would take the struggle for freedom back, not forwards.”

The [League for a 5<sup>th</sup> International](#) made an interesting remark about the Osborn article. Regarding the accusations of “genocide” against the rebels:<sup>38</sup>

*“Osborn cites seven examples to “prove” his point that the existing manifestations of social reaction and breakdown are severe enough that this changes the character of the conflict overall. Of these, one – a YouTube posting by a Jordanian Salafi cleric apparently permitting the rape of non-Muslim women – is pure hyperbole. One could easily, if one wanted to, look for and find YouTube postings by extremists of this sort in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya or indeed any Western country, without making any reference to their actual degree of support.*

*Another report should actually be an encouraging sign: that civilian residents in Mayadeen in Syria’s Deir ez-Zor province (one of Syria’s more conservative regions) have protested against the presence of Jabhat al-Nusra, and its attempts to translate this presence into a form of rule.*

*And a third is questionable to say the least: the claim that 80,000 Christians (50,000 in earlier versions of this story) have been forced to leave Homs as a result of Islamist harassment. The main source for this story has been Mother Agnes-Mariam de la Croix, someone who other Syrian Christians have denounced as a tool of the regime doing its dirty work in spreading rumours designed to incite mutual sectarian suspicion.*

*And here it is worth noting a number of facts. First of all, that Homs’s Christians, by and large, supported the revolution (in fact many of the early peaceful protests took place in Homs’s Christian districts). Secondly, that Homs has practically been levelled by the regime’s bombardment and depopulated as a result of it. Thirdly, if it were true that anti-regime forces had specifically targeted such a large number of Syrian Christians, then where have they gone? All the refugee camps that we are aware of are either outside of the country or in the “liberated zones”, and can therefore be assumed to hold refugees from the regime’s violence.*

*If there were any large number of refugees from the rebels hailing from a minority now living in government-held territory, then one would expect the Assad regime to broadcast this fact to the world, as “proof” of its claims to be the protector of Syria’s minorities. It seems far more credible that Christian Homsis, like most other Homsis, have fled their city as a result of the regime’s own savagery.”*

Today over 100,000 Syrian are dead, a million displaced and tens of thousands are wounded or maimed and the country’s economy is in shambles. Currently it is the regime which has tanks, surface-to-surface missiles, fighter jets and assault helicopters as well as a steady supply of armaments for both itself and Hezbollah from the imperialist bloc of Russia and China and their client state Iran. It is the regime which flattens the cities with heavy armaments in its assault on the so-called “media bubble.” The rebels do not have 200 lb Russian aerial submunitions until they collect unexploded ordnance!

For lack of arms<sup>39</sup> the rebellion is [manufacturing its own](#), while Saudi-Arabia and Qatar funnel arms to their chosen militia and the west deprives the street fighters of the armaments they need (anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons), in particular because (as in Libya) they do not trust the street fighters, whom the State Department suspects may be anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist! **Indeed the UK/French and US imperialists balk at arming the rebels for the same reason Syrian capital fears the rebels.** Contrary to the public perception perhaps carefully fostered, US imperialism has supplied no guns and as yet has no plans to supply any. According to Hannah Allam in the McClatchy [Bergen Record](#), the “military aid” pledged on June 14<sup>th</sup> by Obama turns out to be more “non-lethal” supplies,

communication equipment and trucks which may be further delayed as these purchases require congressional approval and the trucks have not been purchased yet.<sup>40</sup> As Picot said to Sykes, or if you prefer the movie version, as Dryden said to Allenby in “Lawrence of Arabia,” *Give them artillery and you’ve made them independent.*

Adam Davidson writing in the [NYT](#)’s quotes Joshua Landis, a pre-eminent Syria watcher and a professor at the University of Oklahoma:<sup>41</sup>

*“... Landis notes: “They look out at the countryside and think: What if these people win? Are they going to respect capitalism? Are they going to preserve our wealth? Or are they going to come by and say, ‘Oh, you’ve been a collaborator for 40 years, and we’re going to take everything you own’? They don’t know.” (CW emphasis ours)*

Opportunists and sectarians in the imperialist centers all suck up to the labor aristocracy whose position is social-imperialist. That is, workers in the imperialist countries are the “most advanced,” having had their democratic revolution paid for by super-profits. Semi-colonies have to catch up with a national democratic revolution to qualify as “civilized.” If they stuff it up with Jihadists and other “barbarians,” then they are going backward and don’t deserve our support! Anyone who beheads an enemy or eats their hearts is living in the Stone Age, possibly Iron Age. We on the other hand have satellites and drones! The hue and cry of our erstwhile “revolutionary” sectarians and opportunists recollects the French social-patriotic hysteria of the Algerian war of independence, which caused an FLN leader to say: ***Let’s swap our homemade bombs for your planes and see who is civilized!***

#### FOR PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN MENA!

For Revolutionary Marxism the uprising is a product of the international crisis of capitalism and the environment (in the form of debilitating drought) which the Syrian semi-fascist capitalist dictatorship could no longer mitigate with state largess. Al-Assad’s embrace of neo-liberalism poured accelerant on a powder keg. Undoubtedly the destruction caused by the war will give local capital vast opportunity to rebuild, yet a capitalist peace simultaneous with the multiplying inter-imperialist collisions will not resolve the chronic exploitation of the workers and oppression of the Syrian masses.

The “Arab Spring” erupted in response to the unfinished tasks of the Arab national democratic revolution intersecting with the inability of the semi-colonial comprador bourgeois regimes to placate the masses under the conditions of the general crisis of international capitalism and the austerity it demands.

The expression and fight for basic democratic rights is tied in a Gordian knot to the economic struggle of the workers which has exploded in a ring of fire around the Mediterranean. The popular and proletarian character of these uprisings lies not only in their origins (which are multi-class) and the strikes and general strikes that followed, but in the fact that the popular front government cannot protect the masses from imperialist plunder. Indeed they have joined in greedily!

None of the bourgeois factions and no bourgeois faction that happens to be in conflict with the semi-fascist state can carry out the unfinished tasks of the national democratic revolution. Nor is the instigating factor the US imperialist Project for a New American Century and



CIA infiltration; it is the weight of the capitalist crisis on the backs of the masses which has forced the masses to form up democratic organs of self rule breaking the grip of the Syrian Popular Front and is leading the Arab working class to liberate MENA by defeating imperialism and Zionism. Objectively of course, but increasingly also subjectively.

The Local Coordinating Committees (LCC's) are the civilian component of the local mobilizations which formed up the thousand plus micro-militias which both self-direct to defend their locals and loosely affiliate around the FSA and SNC to fight the civil war. And more than any group of émigrés or defectors from the al-Assad military, these local street/neighborhood militias have paid the highest cost, alongside the civilians they defend from the brutal assaults of the government troops.

Dr. [Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm](#), comments on the base structure of the revolution:<sup>42</sup>

*"The striking irony in this situation is that the workers, peasants, craftsmen, students and small-earners of Syria (and they are part and parcel of the Free Syrian Army) are the ones who form the base structure for a revolution against a party which, once upon a time, used to present itself as the party of the workers and peasants, as a "national" leadership that used to claim that it is truly part and parcel of the workers and peasants, and that it has come to save them from the feudal, bourgeois and colonial oppression. This cluster of the Syrian wretched of the earth doesn't only act through a unified class-consciousness, but also by virtue of its religious belongings and sectarian affiliations and doctrinal loyalties, and through its impulse to avenge its squandered dignity and stolen liberties, as well as the harsh reality of extreme subjugation that it lived and is still living, in addition to its constant marginalization and accumulated and continuous disappointments"*

The revolution and democratic mobilization of the masses does not arrive with appropriate timing for the ICL, etc. They say to the masses the workers take no side, wait till we build the party! While the neo-Stalinists say the work of the party is to crush the popular rebellion (because it is in the hands of imperialism), the ICL and others perpetuate this lie by saying the workers have no stake in the rebellion; not until it is under the leadership of the working class vanguard party! These mechanistic fake Trotskyists pay lip service to the fight for the party!

It is precisely right now that revolutionary Marxists should be fighting for the party inside the LCCs, inside the popular militias, challenging the politics of Al-Nusra, Al-Qaida, and SNC for leadership of the masses, acting as the tribune of the people, instigating mutiny and desertion in the Syrian military, advocating independent workers organizations forming up and breaking from the Ba'athist/Communist Party-controlled state trade unions and joining the revolution, and mobilizing the masses to unite with the workers of MENA to re-ignite the Arab revolution and defeat the two imperialist blocs and Zionism.

The Assad supporters which now include much of the left who have signed on to the argument that the uprising is CIA-instigated and run on behalf of NATO, point to arms coming to select (Sunni) militia from Saudi Arabia and Qatar as the proxy connection to Washington and present this as the whole story. Yet the arms needed to stop Assad's tanks and planes are not arriving where needed via these channels. The pro-Assad left claims the uprising is sectarian and that the only

secular force in Syria is the government's forces. Their positions, and this includes the position of HWRS, takes as good coin the contention of the NYT that there are no secular militias in Syria. Of course the NYT editorial position is against any US intervention; and it is inspired by the Likud Party preference for "stability" on the Golan front, i.e. for the continued rule by Assad, just as it preferred Mubarak over the Egyptian masses. Yet evidence has shown that the rebellion, although dominated by the majority of the population, the Sunni, have in their ranks proportional representation from all the peoples, sects and religions.

## In Conclusion

### [Build a United Front Defence of the Syrian Revolution!](#)<sup>43</sup>

"We call on the international working class to mobilize in defense of our class brothers and sisters in Syria and the Middle East against imperialism and their own ruling classes (and for those in the imperialist countries in the first place their own ruling class.) Adopting the proposals emerging from the advanced combat detachments in Libya, Tunisia, and Palestine, our united front must advocate for and build up self-defense pickets of the internationalist working class who initiate actions of solidarity, such as rallies, mass mobilizations, political strikes, and labor interventions in the distribution of military supplies.

In concrete terms an internationalist labor defense of the Syrian masses needs to materially confront imperialism in Syria. In Russia and China this means workers must unite to oppose their own government's support for Assad including taking labor actions to stop arms shipments to the regime. The key tasks of a united front in the US and EU is for workers to organize and provide military aid to the revolution. Without man portable surface to air missiles and other SAMs the masses are at the mercy of Assad's air force.

From the United States to Spain to South Africa to China and Syria, the working class is under all-out assault by capital. Build independent working class opposition to the brutal dictatorship in Syria and to the imperialist paymasters who subject the masses to slaughter. Build this as the defense of our class as a whole.

Defend the Syrian masses! Form up local committees, link them nationally and internationally and take action to provide assistance to the secular and independent working class fighters."

- **Down with Geneva 2, imperialist scheme to rob the masses of every revolutionary gain!**
- **For organizations of workers councils and their class political independence from Syrian bourgeois political forces in the opposition, be they in country or exile.**
- **Only working class political independence will permit defense of the revolution against all its enemies of today and tomorrow.**
- **For Permanent Revolution!**
- **For a Revolutionary Socialist Federation of the Middle East!**

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*Integrating the RWG (Zim), CWG (A/NZ), CWG (USA)*

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#### **Revolutionary Workers Group of Zimbabwe (RWG-ZIM)**

Email: [rwg.zimbabwe@gmail.com](mailto:rwg.zimbabwe@gmail.com)  
 Website: [www.rwgzimbabwe.wordpress.com](http://www.rwgzimbabwe.wordpress.com)  
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#### **Communist Workers Group -New Zealand/Aotearoa (CWG-NZ)**

Email: [cwg006@yahoo.com](mailto:cwg006@yahoo.com)  
 Websites: <http://redrave.blogspot.com>  
<http://livingmarxism.wordpress.com>  
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#### **Communist Workers Group – USA (CWG-US):**

Email: [cwgclasswar@gmail.com](mailto:cwgclasswar@gmail.com)  
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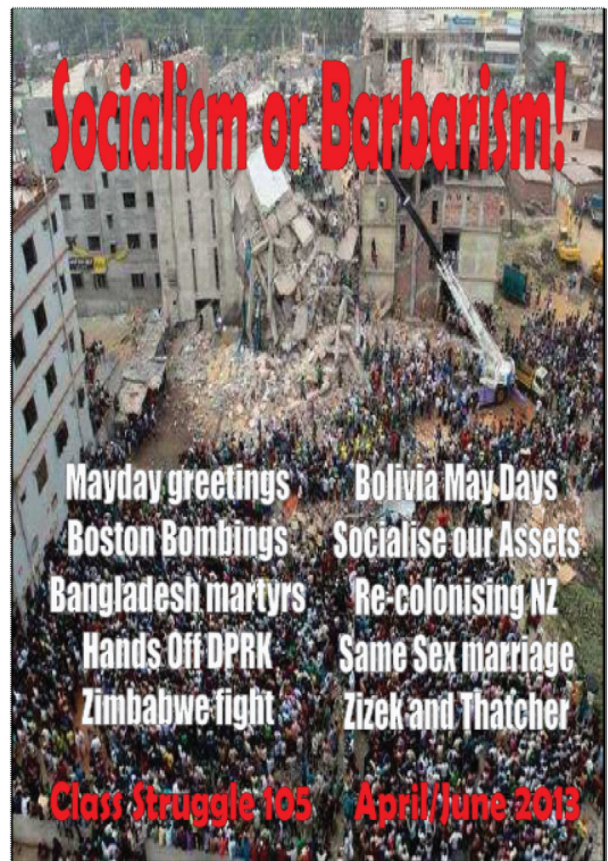
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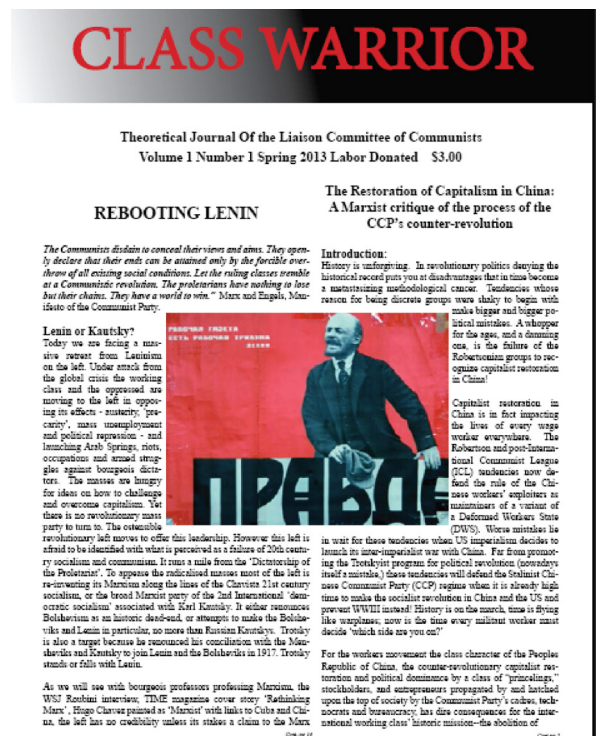
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*Class Struggle (Paper of the CWG-NZ)*



*Class Warrior (Theoretical Journal)*

## What we Fight For

### We fight to overthrow Capitalism

Historically, capitalism expanded world-wide to free much of humanity from the bonds of feudal or tribal society, and developed the economy, society and culture to a new higher level. But it could only do this by exploiting the labour of the productive classes to make its profits. To survive, capitalism became increasingly destructive of “nature” and humanity. In the early 20th century it entered the epoch of imperialism in which successive crises unleashed wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. Today we fight to end capitalism’s wars, famine, oppression and injustice, by mobilising workers to overthrow their own ruling classes and bring to an end the rotten, exploitative and oppressive society that has exceeded its use-by date.

### We fight for Socialism.

By the 20th century, capitalism had created the pre-conditions for socialism –a world-wide working class and modern industry capable of meeting all our basic needs. The potential to eliminate poverty, starvation, disease and war has long existed. The October Revolution proved this to be true, bringing peace, bread and land to millions. But it became the victim of the combined assault of imperialism and Stalinism. After 1924 the USSR , along with its deformed offspring in Europe, degenerated back towards capitalism. In the absence of a workers political revolution, capitalism was restored between 1990 and 1992. Vietnam and China then followed. In the 21st century only North Korea survives as a degenerated workers states. We unconditionally defend the DPRK against capitalism and fight for political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy as part of a world socialist revolution.

### We fight to defend Marxism

While the economic conditions for socialism exist today, standing between the working class and socialism are political, social and cultural barriers. They are the capitalist state and bourgeois ideology and its agents. These agents claim that Marxism is dead and capitalism need not be exploitative. We say that Marxism is a living science that explains both capitalism’s continued exploitation and its attempts to hide class exploitation behind the appearance of individual “freedom” and “equality”. It reveals how and why the reformist, Stalinist and centrist misleaders of the working class tie workers to bourgeois ideas of nationalism, racism, sexism and equality. Such false beliefs will be exploded when the struggle against the inequality, injustice, anarchy and barbarism of capitalism in crisis, led by a revolutionary Marxist party, produces a revolutionary class-consciousness.

### We fight for a Revolutionary Party

The bourgeoisie and its agents condemn the Marxist party as totalitarian. We say that without a democratic and a centrally organised party there can be no revolution. We base our beliefs on the revolutionary tradition of Bolshevism and Trotskyism. Such a party, armed with a transitional program, forms a bridge that joins the daily fight to defend all the past and present gains won from capitalism to the victorious socialist revolution. Defensive struggles for bourgeois rights and freedoms, for decent wages and conditions, will link up the struggles of workers of all nationalities, genders, ethnicities and sexual orientations, bringing about movements for workers control, political strikes and the arming of the working class, as necessary steps to workers’ power and the smashing of the bourgeois state. Along the way, workers will learn that each new step is one of many in a long march to revolutionize every barrier put in the path to their victorious revolution.

### We fight for Communism.

Communism stands for the creation of a classless, stateless society beyond socialism that is capable of meeting all human needs. Against the ruling class lies that capitalism can be made “fair” for all, that nature can be “conserved”, that socialism and communism are “dead”, we raise the red flag of communism to keep alive the revolutionary tradition of the Communist Manifesto of 1848, the Bolshevik-led October Revolution, the Third Communist International until 1924, and the revolutionary Fourth International up to its collapse into centrism, with the closing of the International Center. We fight to build a new Communist International, as a world party of socialism capable of leading workers to a victorious struggle for socialism.

### Join us:

**Where overthrowing capitalism is all in a days work !!!**

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Email: [rwg.zimbabwe@gmail.com](mailto:rwg.zimbabwe@gmail.com)

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Email: [cwg006@yahoo.com](mailto:cwg006@yahoo.com)

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#### **Communist Workers Group – USA (CWG-US):**

Email: [cwgclasswar@gmail.com](mailto:cwgclasswar@gmail.com)

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